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# DATE GROWING

IN

CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA



1913



Grown in Arizona

## DATE GROWING IN CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA

The date, a most delicious and one of the most useful of fruits, has now taken a secure place in the family of adopted American plants. The careful experimental work conducted for a long period by the United States Department of Agriculture has had such complete success that during the past two or three years commercial planting has begun on a large and steadily increasing scale, already amounting, probably, to thirty thousand imported off-shoots and several hundred thousand seedlings.

The date palm is a subtropical growth, and therefore is strictly limited in its possible range in this country. While it easily withstands a fair degree of frost, it requires, to mature its fruit satisfactorily, a long, dry, and hot summer season. For this reason the date will always be confined, in America, to a small territory in the "desert region" of Southern California and Arizona. Here, by the aid of water, are reproduced the exact conditions found in its native homes, the oases of Northern Africa and Arabia. The Coachella and Imperial Valleys in California, and some parts of Arizona, have proved to be pre-eminently suited to the growing of dates. Not only in the Government Experiment Gardens, but in private orchards also, imported palms of many choice varieties have for several years been bearing fruit that is not merely equal, but superior, to that produced in their native homes.

In size and flavor of fruit and in *earliness and equality of bearing*, the American-grown date quite out-classes the Old World product. With the application of American intelligence and enterprise the California and Arizona date will take the same premier position as the California and Arizona Navel orange now holds.



Persian Gulf offshoots being loaded on Tigris River, for shipment to California

## SEEDLING DATES

Date palms are easily grown from the seed, but to seed planting there is always the serious disadvantage that seedlings do not always or often "come true". As with most fruits, the results are totally unreliable, there being an overwhelmingly large proportion of worthless plants, along with a few that are really valuable. In the case of the date, which is a dioecious plant, there is the added objection that fully one-half of the results will be males, of which two or three per cent are all that are necessary in any plantation.

In practice, then, the result of planting one hundred date seeds would be that after waiting for three or four years until the palms showed their sex by flowering, one-half of the plants must be thrown aside. A year or two later the females would begin to fruit. Experiment shows that about three-fourths of these again will prove of little value. The net result would be, at best, fifteen or twenty good plants, secured at the loss of several years' valuable time and expense as regards the discarded palms; and the fruit of these survivors will be so varied as to be commercially saleable only at low prices.

It is evident, then, that the raising of a *commercial* date orchard from seed is a very unpractical method, and one who should attempt it, setting economy of first expense against the loss of time, would in the end be met with the competition of the well established, high grade fruit of his far-sighted neighbors who had planted offshoots instead of seedlings. For the purpose of windbreaks, of pollinization, and of the possibility of originating good new varieties, seedlings will always have their value, but commercially the door must be said at present to be closed upon them.



Offshoots at Busreh, Turkey-in-Arabia, awaiting shipment to California

## STANDARD VARIETIES

The culture of the date from offshoots offers none of the disabilities that occur from the raising of seedlings. The one argument in favor of the seedling for orchard planting is economy in first outlay. However, since the cultivation of the offshoot now presents no special difficulties, the careful grower may expect to bring to maturity ninety per cent to ninety-five per cent of his purchase of plants. The results of years of experimental work, embodied in the bulletins of the Department of Agriculture, and in a complete volume on Date-Growing, (see last page of this pamphlet) are now at the command of the date-planter.

It cannot be too strongly stated, when considering the commercial aspect, that "standardization" is the key to the market with dates, as it is with every class of product. The judicious grower will place emphasis upon the choosing of standard varieties, and by specializing in these will put his plantation in the foremost rank. Such standardization is possible, of course, only by the planting of offshoots. By centuries of care devoted to this, the most valuable of trees to the Arab, certain excellent varieties have been evolved. These are well recognized throughout the date producing countries, and their characteristics have become as clearly fixed as have those of a Bellefleur apple as compared with a Greening. It has been at great cost of time and trouble, and with what comes near to adventure and romance, that these treasured varieties have been secured for America, and here tested to prove their value in the new surroundings.

From the start, these best grades will necessarily command the situation. There will not be, since there need not be, a period of indecision as to what will rule the market. Standardization is possible from the beginning, and standardization is the watchword of the day.



Buying and packing offshoots in the Saharp

## VARIETIES TO PLANT

North Africa and the Persian Gulf region are the two principal native homes of the date-palm which are accessible to white men. The first varieties (including the famous Deglet-Nur) to be planted commercially in this country, came from the former locality, but last year (1913) a large importation was made by the West India Gardens of choice varieties from the Persian Gulf.

### Recommended North African Varieties

#### Deglet Núr

This is the present first favorite, and will certainly continue to be one of the prime varieties. It is a good bearer, fairly large, particularly delicate in flavor, of a deep, translucent, golden brown.

#### Yatímeh

A large fruit of well marked flavor, sweet, and firm but tender. It is a special favorite of the Shaykhs.

#### Tafazwín

Another large, golden brown date, thin skinned but firm and of good keeping and shipping qualities. It ripens rather early.

#### Tazizaút

A strong, hardy palm, the fruit large and firm, keeping excellently. It is a heavy bearer, and can be strongly recommended in all regards.

#### Thúrí

This is a well-proved dry or bread date of excellent flavor, and a very heavy producer. It ripens rather late and keeps long without deteriorating.

#### Ghars

A great favorite in its country and early in ripening. Fruit large, soft, rich in flavor, and a heavy bearer.

#### Hayání

A hardy Egyptian palm, very prolific in offshoots, and a heavy bearer. The fruit is large and has excellent qualities for easy handling. It will be a strong favorite.



Nursery of 13,000 imported offshoots at Thermal, California

## VARIETIES TO PLANT—Continued

### Recommended Persian Gulf Varieties

#### **Khaláseh**

The most famous of Persian Gulf dates, fully equal to the Deglet Nur of North Africa, and earlier. Medium in size, firm, delicate in flavor, reddish amber in color.

#### **Asharasi**

Perhaps the best of the "dry" dates. Medium in size, of fine flavor, and a great favorite in its Babylonian home.

#### **Khadhráwí**

A vigorous variety, early in maturing and prolific in bearing. Fruit medium in size, firm, translucent, rich but not cloying.

#### **Maktúm**

A good bearer, fruit rather large, soft and melting, but firm enough to handle well, golden brown.

#### **Haláwí**

A very important date, early in ripening, prolific, and of good keeping quality. Light in color, medium large, very sweet.

#### **Khustáwí**

Known as "the date of the Grandees." A delicious date, a good bearer, and of good packing and keeping qualities. Of medium size and small seed.

## IMPORTED OFFSHOOTS

The West India Gardens, of Altadena, California, have made the importation of offshoots of the most desirable varieties, both North African and Persian Gulf, a matter of painstaking personal care, and are now able to offer a wide choice of these select sorts. At the West India Plantations near Thermal, in the Coachella Valley, there are thousands of offshoots in nursery and in orchard, and they will be glad to afford to prospective buyers the benefit of their practical experience.

Yearly importations are made, and orders for offshoots will be filled about May first, the best season for transplanting. The importation of date-palm offshoots is a matter involving much responsibility and the utmost care, with special qualifications and practical first-hand knowledge on the part of those engaged in the work.





Eight year old imported palm, bearing fruit and offshoots, Coachella Valley

## THE PROFITS OF DATE GROWING

What profits can be reasonably expected from date growing? One factor—the bearing of the palm—can be fairly counted upon. The other—the price—it will require time to prove. As to yield the results of several years' crops in this country give a range, as between different varieties, of, roughly, from 50 to 200 pounds per palm. One hundred pounds may be taken as a conservative average. This amount is reached in the sixth or seventh year, and will continue during the life of the palm, a period of not less than a century. With regard to price, while that must be a matter for the future finally to decide, the lowest conceivable figure shows a very handsome margin of profit. At the present time, the product of the small number of palms now fruiting here commands a fancy price, 75 cents to \$1.00 per pound, and this must continue for some years at least. By gradual decrease, as new orchards come to bearing the retail figure may drop to, say, 20 cents per pound, below which there is no reason to suppose it will go, in view of the price that the ill-packed, unsightly, and generally inferior imported fruit now commands. At that figure, 20 cents, an acre of fifty trees means \$1,000 gross. Deductions for interest on investment, and cost of cultivation and handling of crop will still leave a very satisfactory profit.

In addition to the returns from the crop itself there is to be borne in mind the value of the offshoots produced. From the fifth to about the fifteenth year an average of two offshoots per year may be reckoned upon from each palm, affording an incidental but fully reliable source of considerable revenue, whether sold or used to increase one's own acreage. This value, when it begins, may be fairly estimated to cover the whole upkeep expense of the plantation.

The only book on Date Growing is

# DATE GROWING

IN THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

BY

PAUL B. POPENOE

WITH A CHAPTER ON FOOD VALUE OF THE DATE

By CHARLES L. BENNETT, M. D.

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## READ THESE PRESS NOTICES:

A book containing a large degree of genuine enlightenment and a small degree of error.

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The timely appearance of this comprehensive volume cannot fail to give a decided impetus to date growing in California. The book is not written in a booster spirit, but rather from a sober and scientific attitude.—C. N. RANDOLPH, IN LOS ANGELES TRIBUNE.

It is written so entertainingly that its perusal is well worth while even to the man who does not nor ever can go into date culture.—ALFRED D. ROBINSON, IN CALIFORNIA GARDEN.

Not since Peter Henderson laid his pen aside has an author on the subject of horticulture appeared with the ability to express himself so clearly, and in such an entertaining manner. Not a superfluous word or sentence in the entire volume. Men of means, whether of much or of little, who contemplate investing in date culture, had better read and study the book before making an investment. Get the book and read it. No fruit grower, whether he grows dates or not, can afford to be without it.

—P. D. BARNHART, IN PACIFIC GARDEN.

A book worth while, a sincere, comprehensive, satisfying account of the very interesting and important subject with which it deals. No thoughtful person will read this book save with the conviction that Mr. Popenoe, by his painstaking studies and thorough presentation of the facts, is destined to have a large part in making California a land of dates.—WM. E. SMYTHE, IN WESTERN EMPIRE.

Mr. Popenoe has produced a book with a wonderful amount of information on the date industry and date culture. To the date grower it will be invaluable; to all soil culturists it will have intense interest.—C. B. MESSENGER, IN CALIFORNIA CULTIVATOR.

As showing the thoroughness with which he has carried out his work, it will probably be a surprise to the reader to find, following the fifteen chapters of detailed instructive matter, that nearly one hundred varieties of the date palm are dealt with—not merely listed, but described.

J. SMEATON CHASE, IN LOS ANGELES TIMES.

The industry is to be congratulated upon having such a suggestive and serviceable treatise issued thus early in its development.—DR. H. J. WEBBER, IN JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE.

It covers the subject in a way that should make it invaluable to every grower of dates or to one contemplating so doing, or to persons interested in the development of California industries.

—D. J. WHITNEY, IN PACIFIC RURAL PRESS.

The book ought to be a profitable venture, but whether it is or not, the author and publishers have performed a work of immense value to an industry which is destined to become one of the greatest in the southwest.—E. F. HOWE, IN IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS.

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